

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LILONGWE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 3260

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

FROM LOW

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PDEV, RH

SUBJECT: RHODESIA: ELECTORAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

1. FOLLOWING IS STATUS OF A NUMBER OF ELECTORAL AND
CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE REGIME.
MANY OF THESE ARRANGEMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN APPROVED BY
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND ARE STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION.
THEY SHOULD BE PROTECTED.

A. PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION PARTY-LIST SYSTEM:
REGIME IS PLEASED WITH ITS DECISION TO MOVE AHEAD WITH
AN ELECTION IN EARLY DECEMBER BASED ON THE PARTY-LIST
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SYSTEM. FOR THE TIME BEING, IT IS PLANNING TO REGISTER
VOTERS FIRST. REGISTRATION CARDS WILL BE PRINTED
USING ULTRAVIOLET INK AND VOTERS WILL PUT THEIR
THUMBS IN THE COLORLESS LIQUID CONTAINING ULTRAVIOLET.
MACHINES WILL THEN BE ABLE TO READ WHETHER THE PERSON
WAS PROPERLY REGISTERED AND HAD NOT VOTED BEFORE.
IT APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT THE REGIME HAS GREAT DOUBTS

AS TO WHETHER IT WILL SUCCEED IN COMPLETING THE REGISTRATION IN TIME AND IS BEGINNING TO CONSIDER DISADVANTAGES OF REGISTRATION: I.E., IT IS VULNERABLE TO INTIMIDATION BY DESTROYING REGISTRATION CARDS; IT IS EXPENSIVE, TIME AND ENERGY-CONSUMING. FAILURE TO REGISTER EVERYONE WOULD RESULT IN DENYING SOME THE VOTE.

B. THE SENATE: THE SENATE IS TO BE MADE UP OF 30 MEMBERS--TEN ELECTED BY THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS; TEN BY THE WHITE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY; AND TEN BY THE GOVERNMENT. IT WILL HAVE THE POWER TO DELAY ORDINARY LEGISLATION FOR SIX MONTHS AFTER WHICH THE ASSEMBLY (OR LOWER HOUSE) CAN OVERRIDE IT. HOWEVER, THE PRIME MINISTER CAN CERTIFY ANY BILL AS "URGENT" IN WHICH CASE THE SENATE CAN ONLY HOLD IT UP FOR EIGHT SITTING DAYS. THE SENATE HAS NO POWER TO AMEND MONEY BILLS AND CAN ONLY DELAY THEM FOR TWO WEEKS.

C. CONSTITUTIONAL PRESIDENT: THE PRESIDENT WILL BE ELECTED BY AN ELECTORAL COLLEGE MADE UP OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY AND SENATE. A MAJORITY VOTE OF THE MEMBERS IS REQUIRED. AFTER THREE BALLOTS, THOSE WITH THE LEAST NUMBER OF VOTES WILL BE ELIMINATED UNTIL ONLY TWO CANDIDATES REMAIN, ONE OF WHICH WOULD

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OBTAIN A MAJORITY.

2. THE INTENTION IS TO RETURN TO SINGLE ELECTORAL DISTRICT AFTER THE FIRST DECEMBER ELECTION. EACH PARTY WILL NOMINATE 72 CANDIDATES. VALID PAPERS WILL BE MARKED WITH AN "X" FOR THE PARTY OF CHOICE.

3. ZAPU IS VERY CRITICAL OF THIS SYSTEM OF VOTING AND WILL PROBABLY MOUNT A CAMPAIGN AGAINST IT. THEY CONSIDER IT WILL ENABLE THE REGIME TO HIDE THE FACT THAT THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO PARTICIPATION IN SOME AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. THEY CONTEND, FURTHERMORE, IT WILL ENCOURAGE SPLINTER PARTIES BASED ON TRIBAL AFFILIATION AND SAY IT IS NOT UNDERSTOOD IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD, AND IS BETTER SUITED FOR A MORE SOPHISTICATED SOCIETY.

4. COMMENT: IT SEEMED APPARENT THAT THE WAY IS BEING PREPARED TO DROP REGISTRATION BECAUSE OF ITS VULNERABILITY TO THOSE OPPOSED TO THE ELECTION. WHETHER OR NOT IT IS POSSIBLE TO RUN THE ELECTION EVENTUALLY, IT IS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR. FURTHERMORE,

HOW MUCH OF AN ELECTORATE THE REGIME WILL BE ABLE
TO GET TO THE POLES IS A MAJOR QUESTION. IN THIS
CONNECTION, HOWEVER, IT MAY BE IMPORTANT TO
RECOGNIZE THAT ZAMBIA WILL BE HOLDING AN ELECTION
JUST A FEW WEEKS BEFORE IN WHICH IT IS UNLIKELY THAT
A SUBSTANTIAL PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION WILL BE
PARTICIPATING. THE FIGURES ON REGISTRATION ARE NOT
YET AVAILABLE, BUT IT WAS VERY APPARENT THAT MOST
ZAMBIANS BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT SELECTED WILL BE
BASED ON A MINORITY OF THE ELECTORATE.
EDMONDSON

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